

Helping your child feel safe enough to talk

A short guide for listening, staying connected, and knowing when to bring in more support.



Start with connection

Your job is not to make every difficult emotion disappear. Your job is to help your child feel safe enough to let you into what they are experiencing.

Words that open the door

- "Tell me more."
- "That sounds really hard."
- "What do you need me to understand?"
- "Would you like me to listen or help you think about what comes next?"

Words that may close it

- "You are fine."
- "Do not worry about it."
- "Other people have it worse."
- "Here is what you need to do."

Keep the door open in everyday moments

Small, ordinary conversations build the trust needed for bigger ones. Your child may not always want to talk. A calm invitation still tells them the door is open.

☐ *What felt good today?*

☐ *What felt hard today?*

☐ *What has been taking up space in your mind?*

☐ *What helps you feel less alone?*





Ask clearly and stay connected

Lean in when you notice new or increasing withdrawal, hopelessness, feeling like a burden, major behavior changes, self-harm, giving away meaningful belongings, or talk about disappearing or dying.

Ask directly

Begin with connection. *“I am really glad you told me. I want to understand what you are experiencing.”*

Then ask clearly. *“Sometimes when people are hurting this much, they think about not wanting to be alive. Have you been feeling that way?”*

If you remain concerned. *“Are you thinking about suicide or killing yourself?”*

Asking directly does not create suicidal thoughts. It makes room for an honest answer.

If your child says yes

- 1 Stay** Remain with your child. Let them know they are not in trouble and you are staying with them.
- 2 Ask** Find out whether they are thinking about suicide now, have hurt themselves, made a plan, or have access to what they would use.
- 3 Secure** Reduce access to firearms, medications, and other potentially lethal items.
- 4 Connect** Call or text 988 for guidance. If danger is immediate, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.
- 5 Follow up** Arrange professional assessment and keep checking in, even if the immediate thoughts have passed.

Utah support

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988 anytime. Parents can also call when they are concerned about a child.

Youth mobile response

Call 988 or 1-833-SAFE-FAM (1-833-723-3326) and ask about youth stabilization or mobile response.

SafeUT

Utah students and parents can chat with a licensed counselor or submit a safety tip at safeut.org.

Utah County youth crisis care

Vantage Point, 1189 E 300 N, Provo. Call 801-373-2215 ahead to confirm current services.

Immediate danger. Stay with your child and call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.

How Cascade can help. Cascade Counseling provides ongoing support for children, teens, parents, and families. Cascade is not an emergency or crisis-response service.





Connection and Safety Plan

Complete this together before a crisis whenever possible.

Child or teen _____ Date _____

Signs that I may be having a hard time

Things others might notice in my words, body, mood, or behavior

What helps me feel heard and connected

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Listen before offering ideas | ☐ Sit near me |
| ☐ Help me find words | ☐ Take a quiet break with me |
| ☐ Help me decide what comes next | ☐ Contact another trusted adult |

Something else _____

How I can say I need help

Our family code phrase _____

Other ways I can reach out ☐ talk ☐ write a note ☐ send a message ☐ draw ☐ ask someone to stay





Backup and Safety Plan

The people we can reach and the steps our grown-ups will take.

My backup team

At home	At school	Another trusted adult
Name _____	Name _____	Name _____
Phone _____	Phone _____	Phone _____

When safety is a concern our grown-ups will

- ☐ Stay with the child and listen without punishment or shame
- ☐ Ask directly about suicide and immediate danger
- ☐ Secure firearms, medications, and other potentially lethal items
- ☐ Contact 988, emergency services, or a qualified professional

Our family promise

No feeling is too big to talk about. You will not be punished for telling the truth. We will listen, stay with you, and bring in more support when it is needed.

Kiddo _____ Grown-up _____

What else I want my grown-ups to know

